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MONITOR LIZARDS

Short-tailed Pygmy Monitor

Varanus brevicauda

Varanus brevicauda is one of the smallest monitors in the world: a brownish, ground-dwelling and diurnal desert dweller from the interior of Australia that reaches only 20-25 cm in length and lives in burrows under spinifex grass. It is rarely kept or bred, and much of its care has to be borrowed from relatives, so the species is only for experienced keepers who are prepared to break new ground.

Family: Varanidae Published 16 November 2026

KEY FACTS

THE ANIMAL

Adult size	**20-25 cm** total length incl. tail
Weight	**8-20 g**
Lifespan	**5-10 years**
Active	**By day**
Lifestyle	**Terrestrial and burrowing**
Habitat	**Desert and semi-desert**
Difficulty	**Experienced**

CARE

Min. enclosure	**80 × 40 × 50 cm** L × W × H for 1 adult
Temperature, day	**28-30 °C**
Basking spot	**38-45 °C**
Temperature, night	**18-20 °C**
Humidity	**30-50%**
UVB	**Recommended** Ferguson zone 3
Diet	**Insects**
Kept	**Singly**

BREEDING

Reproduction	**Egg-laying**
Sexually mature	**10-22 months**
Clutch size	**1-5 eggs**
Clutches per year	**1-3**
Incubation	**70-100 days** at 18-30 °C

PROTECTION AND PAPERWORK

CITES	**Appendix II**
EU annex	**Annex B**
IUCN	**Least Concern (LC)**

Care at a glance

THE ENCLOSURE	No recommended enclosure size has been documented for *Varanus brevicauda*. The 80 × 40 × 50 cm (length × width × height) in the fact box for one adult is an estimate, and bigger is better.
TEMPERATURE	The species is diurnal and loves warmth. There are no documented temperatures from captivity, so the figures are borrowed from *Varanus gilleni*, which also lives in arid country.
HUMIDITY AND WATER	*Varanus brevicauda* comes from arid regions and needs low humidity. The 30-50 % in the fact box is an estimate and is not documented for the species.
LIGHTING AND UVB	*Varanus brevicauda* is diurnal and lives in open country with strong sunlight. There are no documented UVB measurements, but since the species basks and is active in daylight, UVB is recommended.
FEEDING	In the wild *Varanus brevicauda* lives on insects, spiders, scorpions, centipedes and other invertebrates, and also takes small lizards such as skinks and geckos, reptile eggs and occasionally frogs and small snakes.
BEHAVIOUR AND HANDLING	*Varanus brevicauda* is small, but it has the temperament of a real monitor. It hisses, puffs out its throat and lunges if it feels threatened.
NATIVE RANGE	Australia.